



Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends; as for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect; but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now, we see in a mirror dimly but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood. So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love. – 1 Corinthians 13:7-13

When Paul talks about love it seems so beautiful, so elegant. And he is so correct in saying that as everything else passes away, love will persist.

I'm not talking about what popular culture portrays as love, which is likely better labeled lust or hormone imbalance. The love Paul talks about isn't "falling in love" but the persistent, consistent devotion that requires nothing in return. It simply is and always will be.

I've always been struck by Paul's contention that love "endures" all things. And as my life has meandered through a few decades, I've experienced the persistence of love. And I've been convinced that I can love someone deeply while not liking them – or at minimum not liking much of their behavior.

NOTE: I've been married for more than 40 years to the same woman, who I both love and like. However, I don't like it when she puts kale in the dinner salad.

If we think about it, there are times when we really don't like someone we love with all our heart. Consider the following cases:

The parent who tells you that at age 16 you have to be home by 11 p.m. and only date in groups.

The teenager who doesn't get home by 11 p.m. and comes home drunk.

The parent with dementia who can't remember your name and tells you she hates you.

The spouse who explains they have been called to active military service and will be gone for many months.

These situations don't stop love...but they probably stop liking, at least for some period of time.

It is easy to love – and like – a cooperative teen or a granny who is smiling while serving you freshly baked cookies. Even the truest love fails to like the teen with a sassy mouth and the crabby granny with incontinence. But love persists.